

# News from the Oklahoma Army National Guard

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## ***For Immediate Release***

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### **Three Oklahoma National Guard Soldiers lost in helicopter crash in Iraq Guard families find answers, solace in meeting**

Maj. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt, III, adjutant general for the Oklahoma National Guard met with Oklahoma Guard families from Detachment 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 149<sup>th</sup> Aviation Thursday night at 90<sup>th</sup> Troop Command headquarters in Oklahoma City.

Wyatt personally gave his condolences to the families and reassured them their loved ones overseas were being taken care of while continuing on with the mission.

Three Oklahoma National Guard Soldiers and four Texas National Guardsmen—all members of the 149<sup>th</sup>—were lost when their CH-47 Chinook crashed Sept. 17 while en route from Kuwait to Balad where the unit is based.

Wyatt answered questions from the families and assured them he would pass on information about the crash as it became releasable.

“Investigation of the accident will take quite a bit of time,” said Wyatt who asked for patience from the families.

“You are not alone,” said Wyatt, adding the turnout from Tulsa, Lexington and Oklahoma City “was a testimony to the dedication of the families of our Guard Members.”

Tulsa and Lexington family members attended the meeting by video teleconference and others attended by dial-in.

Maj. Teddy Wilson, 90<sup>th</sup> Troop Command chaplain, also spoke to the gathering, reassuring the family members that their loved ones were receiving support from the chaplain and other resources on the ground in Iraq. Wilson said 149<sup>th</sup> Aviation members were undergoing small group sessions designed to help them come to terms with what happened. Here at home he urged the families to stand by in the long run for the families of the downed Soldiers.

Wilson said a memorial service will be held at Balad on Monday.

Wyatt said, “This is a time we need to stick together. The Department of Defense is very thorough, very conservative with their handling of the facts. When they have the correct answers and are very sure the facts are accurate, they will let us know.”

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**Notice to the media:** As required by Public Law, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004 prohibits the release of casualty information on deceased military personnel until 24 hours after notifying the next-of-kin. The Office of the Secretary of Defense is the sole release authority for names of all categories of missing and deceased personnel related to combat operations. Military members cannot make any comments relating to casualties until the information is confirmed via DoD release (see [www.defenselink.mil/news/releases.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/releases.html) <<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/releases.html>> ). Military members will refer all calls to the State Public Affairs office at (405) 228-5212.